DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
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R (493)

Q. Do you think that the sale of AWACS to Saudi Arabia will pose a major threat to Israel's security?

A. NO. SALE OF AWACS TO SAUDI ARABIA WOULD NOT CONSTITUTE ~~A REALISTIC THREAT TO ISRAEL.~~ THE REASONS FOR THIS ARE:

-- AWACS WOULD BE USED PRIMARILY TO PROTECT SAUDI OIL FIELDS;

-- AWACS ESSENTIALLY IS A FLYING RADAR PLATFORM WHICH CAN DETECT AND FOLLOW MOVEMENTS OF AIRBORNE AIRCRAFT. IT CANNOT DETECT MILITARILY SIGNIFICANT GROUND ACTIVITY, IT WILL HAVE NO RADIO MONITORING, PHOTORECONAISSANCE OR INTELLIGENCE GATHERING CAPABILITIES;

-- IT COULD NOT BE USED WITH THE COMBAT AIRCRAFT OF OTHER COUNTRIES WITHOUT EXTENSIVE JOINT TRAINING AND US-SUPPLIED COMPUTER AND COMMUNICATIONS EQUIPMENT;

-- SAUDI AWACS OPERATIONS WILL DEPEND ON US SPARE PARTS, MAINTENANCE AND SUPPORT OF OPERATIONS;

-- AND AN AWACS AIRCRAFT FLYING CLOSE ENOUGH TO ISRAEL TO MONITOR ITS AIRCRAFT WOULD BE VULNERABLE TO BEING SHOT DOWN BY ISRAELI FIGHTER AIRCRAFT.

OBVIOUSLY, PRUDENT ISRAELI PLANNERS WOULD HAVE TO TAKE A SAUDI AWACS INTO ACCOUNT IN THEIR CALCULATIONS. BUT THE OVERWHELMING IMPACT OF THE SALE WILL BE TO ENHANCE SAUDI DEFENSIVE CAPABILITIES -- NOT TO THREATEN ISRAEL.

Drafted: PM/SA:AKanter

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